

**USDA**

**Moderator: Tom Bewick  
August 4, 2011  
11:57 am CT**

Tom Bewick: This is Tom Bewick with the National Institute of Food And Agriculture at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Tom Bewick: Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for joining us this afternoon. I want to start out with a few logistical details. We're using an automated conference system. It's new to the agency and it's - in particular, it's new to me. I'm not really familiar with how this is going to work, so please bear with me. We have 125 ports available and once all the lines are full others won't be able to join in on the call.

We will make my comments, questions from the participants and our answers, available on our Web site. The URL for that Web site is

[www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/peoples\\_garden/peoples\\_garden.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/peoples_garden/peoples_garden.html).

I've initiated one of the meeting features that allows you to hear me, but no one, including me, can hear you. So if you're at home and the dog's barking, there's no need to panic. When it's time to allow participants to ask questions, I'll initiate another feature that will provide automated instructions on how to do that. Please follow the instructions at that time.

It's possible that we won't be able to get to all the questions during this call. If that happens, please email your questions to us and I will answer them. We will also make sure that those questions and my responses are posted on our Web site. The email address to use is [policy@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:policy@nifa.usda.gov).

Before we get started with the People's Grant Program, I want to make everyone on the call aware of a Grantsmanship Workshop being offered by NIFA and the University of Tennessee on Tuesday, August 9. The workshop is Web-based so you can participate from your home or office. Registration is required, but there is no charge to register. The workshop is scheduled to run from 8:30 am to 4:00 Eastern Time.

For those that aren't interested in the specific programs being highlighted in the workshop, the first half-hour will contain an overview of the grant application, grant review, and award processes. To register for the workshop, please go to <http://agresearch.tennessee.edu/nifa>.

There's links on the left-hand side that you can follow to register and you'll be sent an email on how to access the site on next Tuesday. On the NIFA site at [http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/training/cpworkshops\\_past.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/training/cpworkshops_past.html) you can also access archives from past workshops where there is additional information about the grant application and review process.

The People's Garden Grant Program is a new program in 2011. On Page 2 of the RFA there is a request for stakeholder input regarding the request for applications. Details on how to provide the input is contained in this section. Often people think that comments sent to federal agencies are ignored, but I can assure you that if you take the time to comment on the RFA we will consider those comments when drafting the next RFA. We can't always

incorporate everything that's suggested for legal reasons, but we do consider each comment that we receive. This sounds like a big job, but rarely are comments submitted.

The People's Garden Grant Program was created by Secretary Vilsack. The Secretary had a meeting with representatives from agencies across the USDA and charged them with creating a funding opportunity that would catalyze the creation of People's Gardens across the US.

NIFA was charged with administering the program and in Fiscal Year 2011 five agencies stepped forward with funding to support grants in this effort. Those agencies are the Agricultural Marketing Service, the Animal and Health Plant Inspection Services, the Food and Nutritional Service, the Forest Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. A total of about \$725,000 is available to make awards in Fiscal Year 2011.

Secretary Vilsack in his travels around the country has heard that there are many communities that would like to create People's Gardens but they lack either the financial or educational means to fulfill this goal. Therefore the major goal of the People's Garden Grant Program is to facilitate the initial human and resource investment needed in these communities.

The Secretary wants to see as many People's Gardens as possible be formed. Both urban and rural areas are included and an emphasis is on communities identified as food deserts or food insecure in areas of persistent poverty or low income. Schools are specifically considered in this program.

It's important to remember that the People's Garden Grant Program is designed to meet initial needs for program implementation and is not intended to provide long-term program support.

There are several important factors to be aware of in applying to this program. **All applications must be submitted through the Grants.gov web site. In order to use this Web site, you must be registered. The registration process can take two to three weeks. If you are a first time user, you need to begin the registration process immediately while at the same time beginning to develop the other materials that you will need to submit.**

It's also important to note that Grants.gov is used by all federal agencies that make grants. Each day there are thousands of applications that come through the site. Most federal agencies use 5:00 pm Eastern as the deadline time. If you wait until late in the day to begin submitting your application, you are likely to run into problems.

Another important consideration is that **all files submitted to the program must be in the PDF format.** There is free software on the grants.gov Web site that allows you to convert word processing files into PDF. Files that are not in the PDF format cannot be captured into the NIFA peer review system and the result is that the reviewers will see only blank pages. Obviously that's not a good way to make a positive impression on the reviewers.

It's imperative that applicants read the RFA carefully. Everything essential to preparing a winning application is contained in the RFA. **Please pay particular note to the list beginning on Page 5 that begins, "Successful proposals will..."**

Please note that the second bullet located on Page 6 calls for the development of a micro-subgrant program. For the 5th bullet, we have received additional information from the Food and Nutritional Service indicating that matching

funds are not required to qualify for funds provided by FNS. That section will be modified soon to reflect that fact.

However, **Forest Service funds must be matched dollar for dollar.** If you want your application to be considered for all available funds, you will need to document the required match in your budget. This section will also be modified to reflect this information. Since I've had numerous questions about matching funds, I'll talk about this more a little bit later.

Also, on Page 7, **please note that the maximum request, including indirect costs, is \$150,000 and that micro-subgrants should be in the range of \$1000 to \$5000 each.**

Please note on Page 11 that **the maximum number of pages for the project narrative is eight pages plus two pages for pictures or figures.** The project narrative only includes the introduction, the objectives, and the methods.

Please note the funding restrictions on the bottom of Page 12. Also please note the other submission requirements on the bottom of Page 13.

And extremely important point to note is the evaluation criteria, which are located on Page 14. These are the criteria that will be used by the Peer Review Panel to rank applications.

Now before we open the lines for questions from participants, I want to cover some items that have come up frequently in the numerous phone calls I have received. One group that contacted me organized a list of questions that they submitted via email in a way I thought was very useful as a tool for thinking about the program and so I'm going to use that to get started.

Probably the most often asked question involves eligibility. The RFA states, **"Eligible applicants are State agricultural experiment stations, State cooperative extension services, all colleges and universities, other research or education institutions and organizations, Federal and private agencies and organizations, nonprofit organizations, individuals, and any other contractor or recipient."** In addition, Award recipients may contract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the implementation of the project.

Eligibility is quite broad because the Secretary wants to create as many gardens across the country as possible. We have determined that tribes, states, and municipalities are eligible to receive grants.

A second point that I've had a lot of questions on are the matching funds issue. As noted earlier, some of the funds available in this program have a requirement that every federal dollar received be matched by non-federal resources. It's important to remember that it is the total requested budget that must be matched. Not every participant in the project has to document matching funds. So if an organization wants to make 15 micro-subgrants, there is no requirement that all 15 sub-recipients be able to provide matching funds.

**Matching contributions can be either cash or in-kind.** In-kind contributions can include staff time needed to administer the program that is not budgeted in the application, fair market value of land, volunteer hours, supplies and other things that are essential for achieving the objectives of the application for which federal dollars are not requested, and unrecovered indirect costs. **If your organization is willing to hold budgeted indirect costs to 10% of total direct costs and your organization has a negotiated indirect cost rate**

**that is greater than 10%, you may use the difference between the two as a source of non-matching funds.**

Another area of questions was on allowable activities. **Organizations are allowed to develop a new garden or refurbish or improve an existing garden for the purpose of using it for the educational component of the grant.** Such educational activities could include demonstrations of how to establish, plant, and maintain a garden, what different plants look like and how they can be used, or how gardens can be used as recreational activities to engage youth or other target groups in physical activity.

There are also other possibilities that you would need to explain in your application. Other types of educational activities are also allowed, such as the development of web-based or print-based resources for potential garden creators.

The development of a mechanism for providing resources to people or groups that want to create People's Gardens is an allowable activity. This is what we describe as micro-subgrants. These resources can include cash, but are not limited to monetary transactions. For example, one could create a toolkit that contains the necessary items that people would need to create a produce, recreational, and/or wildlife garden. This would also be allowable. In general, activities that relate to the establishment of People's Gardens would be allowable expenditures.

However, there are some activities that are not allowed. Reading from the RFA, **"The People's Garden Grant Program award funds may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research education or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition or construction**

**of buildings or facilities. The People's Garden Grant Program award funds may not be used to support the salaries of U.S. government employees. The purchase of equipment is limited to that which is required for training, teaching, extension demonstration, and other relevant project activities."**

Some examples of allowable expenses would be supplies needed for educational and garden-related activities. **Equipment costing over \$5000 with durable life of over one year is allowed only in special circumstances.** Equipment rental, if justified, is allowable. The budget forms illustrate the categories of allowable expenses.

As far as the micro-subgrant programs, **there is no predetermined percentage of funds that should be used for these sub-awards. However, the RFA states on Page 6, Bulleted Item 5, that the expectation is that the majority of funds would be used for this purpose. That means more than 50%.** Any entity that wants to create or improve a People's Garden is eligible for a sub-award. All activities and expenses that are related to the creation of a People's Garden are allowable for sub-awards, however, remember that **sub-awards should be between \$1000 and \$5000.**

As far as management of funds, NIFA has developed web-resources to help with this question. Please go to this URL,  
[www.http://nifa.usda.gov/business/managing\\_grant.html](http://nifa.usda.gov/business/managing_grant.html).

Each bulleted item is a link to information needed to manage a grant from NIFA.

At this time I'm going to activate the feature that will allow you to ask your questions.



Q1: Define a People's Garden.

Tom Bewick: I'm looking in the RFA because the definition for that is located in the RFA on Page 5. It says, " In order for a produce, recreation, or wildlife garden to receive the designation of a People's Garden, it must meet all three of the following criteria: 1) benefit the community, 2) incorporate sustainable practices, and 3) be collaborative. For additional information regarding the People's Garden Initiative, visit the Web site <http://www.usda.gov/peoplesgarden>."

Q1: Thank you.

Q2: Can a startup nonprofit that doesn't have 501(c)(3) status yet apply under the fiscal agency of an existing nonprofit?

Tom Bewick: Yes.

Q2: Is there anything special I need to know about that?

Tom Bewick: Not that I'm aware of. If you submit an application, the eligibility is so broad that I can't imagine you would not be eligible. I do the administrative reviews of the applications and once I accept it in for review, then your application will be reviewed.

Q2: Thank you.

Tom Bewick: Okay, next question.

Q3: Are we going to need a DUNS number to apply for this grant?

Tom Bewick: **You definitely need a DUNS number to apply for the grant.**

Q3: Thank you.

Tom Bewick: Okay.

Q4: On the eligibility, are municipalities, local governments, among the broad scope of eligibility?

Tom Bewick: Yes.

Q4: Thank you.

Q5: Do you have any advice on how large or small a region we can focus the subgrants on?

Tom Bewick: My advice would be to do what you can manage. If you are an organization that has a broad geographical range and you have lots of really good contacts across the broad region, go for it. As long as you can demonstrate to the reviewers that you have the capacity to achieve the objectives that you describe in your application. I don't think that we're limited by geographic scope.

Q6: Does the subgrants program have to be competitive or can we just say we are going to award grants to these ten groups?

Tom Bewick: **It (the subgrants program) does not have to be competitive.**

Q7: And then the final question is would we be able to install some sort of scales to weigh produce in the gardens or would that be considered built structures?

Tom Bewick: No, scales would be fine.

Q7: All right. Thank you very much.

Tom Bewick: You're welcome.

Q8: As far as the education component, can organizations include salary for staff to do something like teacher training in science-based curriculum so they can use their gardens at schools?

Tom Bewick: Yes, that's an allowable expense. **Just remember that the expectation is that the majority of funds would go towards the creation of People's Gardens.**

Q8: Right. Thank you.

Q9: How detailed do the mini grant proposals need to be in the initial application? Do you need details on what each of those small grants will actually bill for or do we just need to demonstrate that we have the capacity to award those grants?

Tom Bewick: You just need to demonstrate the capacity to award the grants.

Q10: We're wondering whether or not building a greenhouse in Southeast Alaska would qualify as an expense that we would be able to ask for funding for?

Tom Bewick: No, as I explained, the funds cannot be used for installation. I'll read it to you from the RFA, **funds cannot be used for “renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation,**

**acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities."** That's located on Page 12. Greenhouses are considered buildings.

Q10: But would we qualify under special circumstances because of the Alaskan weather?

Tom Bewick: No, **you could use hoop houses because hoop houses are not permanent structures, but greenhouses are permanent structures and it's the law.** We're not allowed to fund those kinds of activities.

Q10: Okay, thank you.

Q11: We're considering having several gardens throughout a county. Would it be appropriate to micro fund a garden in the local jail with education?

Tom Bewick: Yes.

Q12: These sub micro grants, I know you have to have an educational component to it, but the majority of the funds will be used to build like the garden boxes, the perimeter fence, a small tool shed, is that what the thought process is and then adding an education component? Because when you described it, it sounded like these funds should be heavily used towards education.

Tom Bewick: That's my personal bias as a professor for 15 years. But no, we anticipate that the micro sub-awards would be primarily for the construction of the garden itself. The educational component would be developed by the primary awardee and then as the garden matured over time it should be used to meet the definition of a People's Garden. It should have an educational component to it. But the initial sub-awards would be just for the establishment of the garden.

Q13: Would potlucks be considered recreation for the community?

Tom Bewick: In general, the USDA cannot fund food and beverages. You could have a potluck, but you couldn't use our money to do it.

Q13: I'm just trying to get my understanding of recreation in the garden. Recreation is like physical activity, is weeding considered a recreation?

Tom Bewick: At my house it is, but my kids don't think so.

Q14: Green space.

Tom Bewick: The development of green space, someplace where people can go and watch wildlife, go and relax, those sorts of things. It doesn't have to be a ball field or anything like that, but just some place where people can go and enjoy the outdoors.

Q15: Usually gardens have a small tool shed to keep the tools under cover from the elements, would that be considered construction of a structure and wouldn't be eligible for the funding?

Tom Bewick: A shed per se would not be eligible for funding, but if you were to construct a box, a locked toolbox that was say waterproof, that would be eligible for funding, but not a shed.

Q15: Okay. Thank you.

Q16: Could you tell me the name of that web site again for the registration for the Grantsmanship Workshop?

Tom Bewick: Certainly. It is: <http://agresearch.tennessee.edu/nifa>.

Q17: And I just want to clarify, if we want to award mini grants and we're a national organization, we don't have to have the grantees pre-chosen, we just have to show that we have the capacity to give the grants away?

Tom Bewick: That's correct.

Q17: Thank you.

Q18: I'm confused with the mini grants, the \$1000 to \$5000. Is this to be inclusive in the writing of this big grant? If I'm going to write a grant for \$100,000, explain the micro subgrants.

Tom Bewick: If you were going to submit an application for \$100,000, our expectation is that at least \$50,000 would go towards the micro subgrants. If you went with the maximum number, of \$5000 (subgrants) then you would propose to fund ten People's Gardens. **The micro grants are to fund the creation of People's Gardens.**

Q18: And the other \$50,000 would be for what?

Tom Bewick: Activities that you need to undertake to support the distribution of the funds for the creation of People's Gardens. The development of educational materials, administrative costs for advertising, funds for receiving the applications for the sub-awards, etc.

Q19: Okay, because we're partnering - I'm at a university here in Colorado and we're going to partner with another university, so we could have these micro subgrants between the two cities where the two universities are located?

Tom Bewick: Okay.

Q19: So we would have to write a grant then for ten micro subgrants where there would be gardens in the different cities, five in each city, and maybe \$25,000 for each university to manage.

Tom Bewick: That's an example of how you would do it. You would decide that for yourself.

Q19: Yes, but that is an example.

Tom Bewick: Yes.

Q19: Because we already have mini gardens starting throughout the Greeley area, we would write a grant to sustain each one of those gardens. Because we already have two gardens, we would write a micro grant to sustain each one of those two gardens and then maybe develop three more.

Tom Bewick: **You can use the funds from this program to refurbish or renovate an existing garden, but really the intent of the program is to supply the startup funding for new gardens, not to supply ongoing funding for existing gardens.**

Q19: Okay. It's for new gardens.

Tom Bewick: Yes.

Q19: Okay. Thank you.

Q20: Will applicants be penalized for proposing mini grants beyond \$5000?

Tom Bewick: **Mini grants beyond \$5000 will not be allowed.**

Q20: Okay. Thanks.

Q21: Yes, we're an urban garden program for young people, and we were wondering if an art and agriculture day would be allowable to a garden and would you fund those expenses? Also, if we visit a rural dairy farm that's interested in establishing a garden, can we have travel expenses from this grant?

Tom Bewick: Travel expenses are allowed. As far as the field day, some expenses would be allowed, but not all expenses. Like I mentioned earlier, the USDA funds cannot be used for the purchase of food and beverages, as an example.

Q21: Right.

Tom Bewick: But the cost of setting up demonstrations and that sort of thing, certainly those would be part of the educational component.

Q22: So travel and gas are okay. And just one other thing, do we need to submit a curriculum if it's a sub grantee, one of the smaller grants?

Tom Bewick: No.

Q22: Okay. Thank you.



Tom Bewick: But it would strengthen the application. The more information you can provide the better, but it's not required.

Q22: Thank you.

Q23: Can you clarify the matching funds topic? It sounds like we don't need to provide matching funds or cost-sharing funds unless we want to go for the funds that USDA Forest Service has contributed?

Tom Bewick: That's correct.

Q23: And then on the allowable expenses, would something like installing a fence or installing water at a garden or purchasing a tiller be allowable?

Tom Bewick: A tiller would be allowable if it was less than \$5000. I think that establishing an irrigation system would be allowable. What was the other one?

Q23: A fence.

Tom Bewick: A fence. Yes, it depends on the reason for the fence. If the fence was part of the garden then I think it would be allowable.

Q23: Say if it was for deer control or something like that?

Tom Bewick: Yes, that would be allowable.

Q23: Okay. Thank you.

Q24: I was wondering whether or not you would be willing to fund part of the garden being a demonstration composting site? We'd actually like to even work with some school cafeteria composting programs where we might designate some of the funds for a portable in-vessel composter because there are some special constraints in our area that would support such a thing. We have done some pilot programs at schools (here).

Tom Bewick: Yes, that would be allowable.

Q25: Also, it says the project duration should not exceed 24 months, but then it mentions it's statutory. It is just 24 months though, is that right?

Tom Bewick: **The project period is 24 months. If you get to the end of your project period and you haven't used all the funds, we have the ability to grant you a no-cost extension. But we can only grant extensions up to the statutory life of the program.**

Q26: Okay. And the cost-sharing (section) on Page 8, says institutions are required to contribute resources to objectives by limiting costs to 10% of total funds awarded. I'm not quite sure I understand what that means.

Tom Bewick: Those are indirect costs. Some organizations have infrastructure costs that they need to recoup and so that's what those funds are used for.

Q26: Okay, so up to 10% could be used to help them recoup those costs.

Tom Bewick: Correct.

Q27: And on Page 11, it says a senior key person (should be) involved in this, do we have to identify this person ahead of time? That's kind of what it sounds

like - that you need to know who is going to be the program supervisor or director. Is that the intention here?

Tom Bewick: Yes, that's right. The project director is the person that is responsible for ensuring that federal funds are used to achieve the objectives of the awarded projects.

Q27: Okay, and that person must be affiliated with the applicant that's going to receive the funds, correct?

Tom Bewick: That's correct.

Q27: Okay. I think that's probably about it. Thank you.

Q28: Hi, I'm back at the beginning at the registration stage. We have a DUNS number, I've used it as the password as I was instructed in trying to get to the next stage and it said it was wrong, then I went back to logging in using it said that I already had one, so I got into one of those mind melting loops. Do you have any suggestions?

Tom Bewick: Yes, on Page 10 in the RFA there is contact information for the Grants.gov customer support. Grants.gov is a government-wide resource. It doesn't belong to USDA, it certainly doesn't belong to the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, but there's a toll free number. It's 1-800-518-4726. They're open 24/7. They are closed on federal holidays. There's an email address too it is support@grants.gov. They'll be able to help you get through that registration.

Q28: Wonderful. Thank you very much.

Q29: I have two questions. One is, is there going to be a way we can access this conference call we've been involved with?

Tom Bewick: Yes. We'll make the entire conference call available on our web site.

Q30: And the second question is, as the lending institution, are we also allowed to have our own garden and request funds for that as well?

Tom Bewick: Yes.

Q30: Okay, thank you.

Q31: We have an existing community garden from a grant from last year, and right now we're looking at expanding it and getting some raised beds and covering some maintenance and equipment. Would this (program) support that project too?

Tom Bewick: Expansion and refurbishment of existing gardens is allowable under this program. But there's a fine line there. The major intent is to create new gardens, not provide ongoing support to existing gardens. So in as much as your expansion is needed to meet new objectives for this program, it would be allowable.

Q31: At (Wagner) garden we have water bills and just general maintenance performance, (meaning) equipment to weed and things like that.

Tom Bewick: That's really outside the scope of this program.

Q31: Okay. All right, thank you.

Q32: Yes, I am from a rural Nevada community and we are looking at writing a grant in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 range and I know there's only \$725,000 and there's a million people on this call, do you have any recommendations for the average cost that you presume that a grant would be supported?

Tom Bewick: No. The process for deciding who receives funds is we use a peer review process. So we have outside reviewers, each application is reviewed by three people, we bring them together, each application is discussed, and then it's ranked. One of the things that I always admonish the reviewers is 'do not look at the budget'. We want to fund good work. So if you have a fantastic project and you describe it eloquently and you convince the reviewers that you're the project then we will fund your project. But there's no set amount that we anticipate funding.

Q32: Thank you.

Q33: We have an existing 20 acre botanic garden which needs to be completely refurbished so people can come in and watch the birds and the animals going through and also an area with nothing but native plants. Now that's not a new garden, but it's converting an old one into something new. Does anything like that sound reasonable?

Tom Bewick: I believe that I've already said the refurbishment of existing gardens is an allowable expense, but the majority of the funds should be used to create new People's Gardens. So all the guidance I can give you on that would be this it is allowable, but how well would it review is another question.

Q33: I understand. Thanks.

Q34: Are per diems to planning and zoning committees looking at township community gardens an allowable expense?

Tom Bewick: No.

Q35: What about permits? If they require us get permits for hoop houses.

Tom Bewick: Yes, that would be allowable.

Q36: And what about a device that actually allows us to swipe an EBT card in the State of Michigan?

Tom Bewick: I'm not sure why you would need one of those, but if you can justify the need for it, it would be an allowable expense, as long as it's less than \$5000.

Q36: It is.

Tom Bewick: Okay.

Q36: Okay, thank you.

Q37: We are listening to all the questions and all your answers and it sounds like in the application you're trying to convey your capacity to be able to attract and award the subprojects, but we actually have six gardens that are in various stages of approval but are lacking funding. Should the application stress details on these six gardens? Because I'm just hearing and reading through this thing and it sounds like it's trying to convey our capacity to actually award them.

Tom Bewick: Well that's certainly an important consideration. But if you have sub-awards that you know you're going to make, a description of those gardens wouldn't hurt. You don't have to go into a lot of detail. Remember, you only have eight pages. That's basically about 3000 words, so it's not a lot of space.

Q38: And a follow up question, I'm still a little confused about the matching funds from the US Forest Service. Just as an example, we have this one project where there's an existing tree canopy next to a coastal area and it's in disarray, it's got weeds growing all over it, and what we're thinking about doing is creating a nature walking trail as part of a public park and going in there and actually getting rid of all the invasive species and just make it, you know, a navigable, forest trail. Is that something, a project that would need matching funds in order to get approval for the sub-award?

Tom Bewick: Not necessarily. The only requirement is that if you wanted to access the Forest Service funds, you would have to have a dollar for dollar match. You remember that I went through a lot of detail on what could be used for matching. It doesn't have to be cash. It can be in-kind contributions, volunteer help, fair market value for land rent, etc. To give yourself maximum flexibility, it would be good to document as much matching as you possibly can.

Q38: Okay, but this would be for the paperwork for the micro grant you guys have to approve, but for the purposes of this application to secure the grant, do you really have to worry about determining whether or not you're going to go after the US Forest Service funding or not?

Tom Bewick: I would say not. But you want to get as much documentation in the application upfront as you can. And when you go into Grants.gov and you access the budget forms, there's a column for the funds you're requesting from

the federal source and then there's a column to designate the non-federal portion of the budget. And so you want to put as much information on those forms as you possibly can because although I tell the reviewers not to use the budget as really a quality characteristic, the reviewers are asked to look at the budget and give us an opinion on the appropriateness of the budget. So as much information as you can put in there, the better off you're going to be.

Q39: Okay. And the last quick question, our organization is mainly volunteer-based, I mean, we don't have a lot of money that's going to pay overhead or pay salaries or anything like that. Would that put us at a disadvantage to some of these other bigger organizations that have salaried positions which can convey maybe their ability to better award micro grants?

Tom Bewick: No, each application is considered on its own merits. So as long as you can do an adequate job describing your process for making sub-awards, we're not going to compare apples and oranges, so to speak. Okay.

Q39: (Oh), okay.

Tom Bewick: And if you have a lot of volunteer hours, the fair market value of those volunteer hours can be used as match - as a source of matching funds.

Q39: Oh, that's a good point. Okay, great.

Tom Bewick: All right. Good luck.

Q40: I have two questions. The first one is, can the gardens be located on both public and private property as long as the public has the access to the garden?

Tom Bewick: Yes.



Q41: My other question is, is there a percentage capital and admin dollars or is it just rolled up into that 10% in...

Tom Bewick: It's rolled into that 10%.

Q41: Okay, thank you.

Q42: Hi there. I'm interested to know if there is any process support for the micro grants. I mean, is there a standard application that the program will let us use, or is that something that we need to develop all on our own?

Tom Bewick: You would need to develop that yourself.

Q43: All right. And how does a person become a reviewer for your program?

Tom Bewick: Send me an email.

Q43: All right. Thank you.

Q44: I'm a pastor of a church in a rural community in Southwest Washington State and we're a community of about 3000 people but it seems that we've got a critical mass of partner organizations that are interested in getting a new community garden going here. And in some respects right now listening to all of these other questions, I'm feeling like a mouse at the elephant's watering hole and I'm not sure if we're coming at the right time or if we should be looking for one of those micro subgrants.

But basically what I'm wondering is, what we want to do is establish a garden that does not exist currently. The church that I pastor at, it has available land

that can be used. And our thinking was to offer plots to the local school, to a couple of low-income housing buildings, and to the local food bank as part of what we're doing there, in addition to opening it to community involvement. Should we be applying for this grant or looking for something on the micro subgrant level when that's available?

Tom Bewick: No, to me it sounds like you could, depending on how many of these smaller gardens you were going to create. You could be the primary recipient and then make, \$1000 to \$5000 awards to each of the schools or the disadvantaged communities, etc.

Q44: Okay. And is it problematic that I'm representing a church that might be applying for this grant? Would I be better to look at one of our other partners to do it or are there no issues?

Tom Bewick: No issues.

Q44: Okay, great.

Tom Bewick: Okay.

Q45: Are edible gardens looked at higher on the totem pole as you review applications do you think?

Tom Bewick: No.

Q45: Okay. Thank you.

Q46: Do the micro grants have to be as much as a \$1000 or can they be smaller?

Tom Bewick: I think they could be smaller, but given prices today, it's hard to imagine that you could start a garden for less than 1000 bucks.

Q46: So we're in the process of starting a community garden that is adjacent to our food shelf and supporting the food shelf and we're looking at having individual organizations adopt two or three beds and we can build two or three beds for less than \$1000.

Tom Bewick: Yes. Well, it would be the whole garden, not just the individual beds.

Q46: So you have to have multiple gardens for this program? It can't be just one garden.

Tom Bewick: It would be preferred that it be multiple gardens, yes.

Q46: Ah.

Tom Bewick: Is that it?

Q46: Yes, thank you.

Q47: Hi, up in Colorado we currently have five community gardens, four that are currently already working gardens and we've got one that's in the works. We want to basically pull together a garden network to bring all the gardens together. And one of the main projects that we'd like to work on is a Web site for resources and education and compile all the great information that we're able to bring together. Would this be applicable for money, promotion, web site design, development, marketing?

Tom Bewick: The educational component would be an allowable activity, but remember that the primary goal of the program is to create new People's Gardens.

Q47: New gardens. Okay.

Tom Bewick: Yes.

Q48: And then just one other quick one. We have experimental beds that are research-based and educational-based. Are we able to apply for a stipend to have an experimental bed coordinator coordinate and execute this project?

Tom Bewick: I think that falls outside the scope of this program.

Q48: Okay. Thanks.

Q49: Hi there. This is a follow-up to an earlier question. I just want some clarification about utilities. If we have a site that's made available to us and in order for us to operate gardens they are responsible for utilities, specifically water, can funds from this grant be used for those micro grants for those water bills?

Tom Bewick: I don't think that's there is any law preventing us from doing that. It's just not a priority for this program. The main priority for this program is the establishment of new gardens.

Q49: Right. I understand. So this would be to establish the gardens, but we would be allowed to earmark a reasonable amount of money for water bills if we could justify that.

Tom Bewick: Correct.

Q50: Okay. Is there any restriction on gardens that are market gardens with the intention of selling? Does this not allow individuals who grow things to then sell on site, like a Saturday market or a produce stand or something on that garden site?

Tom Bewick: Just go back on Page 5. The definition of a People's Garden is that it benefits the community, incorporates sustainable practices, and is collaborative. And as long as the garden meets those criteria, what the community does with the products from the garden is up to the community. I don't think it's precluded that the products be sold.

Q50: Okay. Thank you very much.

Tom Bewick: You're welcome.

Q51: I was just wondering if you could repeat the information that you gave based on the workshop. I know you said the timeframe was from 8:30 to 4:00?

Tom Bewick: [http://agresearch](http://agresearch.tennessee.edu/NIFA), all one word, A-G-R-E-S-E-A-R-C-H, .tennessee, the State, .edu/NIFA - <http://agresearch.tennessee.edu/NIFA>

Q51: Okay, great. Thank you very much.

Q52: Is there going to be money here for travel? I work with the refugee and immigrant community and they would need bus tickets to get to and from the garden. And then can you explain a little bit more to me about the research part of it.

Tom Bewick: There is really not a research component to this program. It's an educational component.

Q52: Okay.

Tom Bewick: As far as travel to and from the garden, I think you're sort of getting near the line there. As long as the transportation is required for the establishment of the garden, I think that would be allowable. But just remember that the intent is to create new gardens, not to support established gardens. Okay.

Q52: Well, in order for the underserved population, this is the group that I work with, they would have to travel in a bus to some of the locations that we would be able to implement a garden, so they would have to travel to those gardens. But it sounds like that's kind of tricky.

Tom Bewick: Travel is an allowable expense, but in your application you would have to present really sound justification for why the funds should be used for that purpose.

Q52: Okay. Okay. And it's more educational instead of research.

Tom Bewick: Correct.

Q52: Okay, thank you.

Q53: Can you clarify when the awards will be made?

Tom Bewick: **The awards have to be made before September 30.**

Q53: Thank you.

Q54: Yes, (as) I understand that most of the micro grants are to create new community gardens, but can you use the micro grants to provide education? Such as we have a master herbalist who could come in and provide education on an herbal section of the garden. Could we use a micro grant to pay for this person to come and provide an educational series?

Tom Bewick: **The concept of the micro grant is really to establish the gardens.** But you could certainly as part of your educational component as the primary recipient, you could have your master herbalist come and talk with the various gardeners about herbs. It could be included in your budget for the educational component. But you just wouldn't call it a micro grant.

Q54: Okay, but it would be the educational portion not be considered part of the 10% administration.

Tom Bewick: Correct.

Q54: Okay. Thank you.

Q55: I wanted a little bit of clarification on the \$5000 limit. That's for equipment and supply type things specifically?

Tom Bewick: Yes.

Q55: So if we wanted an in-vessel composter, which is more than \$5000 that would not be allowable?

Tom Bewick: No.

Q55: The biggest limitation to gardening in our area is that lack of soil. So we could spend as much as we needed to on soil? It's a huge expense for us. That's why we wanted to do a kind of large-scale composting because that could offset the cost of soil. That would be how we produce our soil for our gardens.

Tom Bewick: The equipment is a problem. There are special circumstances where equipment over \$5000 is allowable, so if you wanted to include that in your budget and then make a justification for it, you know you run the risk that we would not allow that expense, but if it's absolutely critical for the achievement of your objectives, it could be allowed.

Q55: I'm assuming that you might take the liberty of saying we'll fund this grant but we'll fund this part, but we won't fund that part or is that not the case? Is it going to be kind of a carte blanche that you're going to fund everything or not at all?

Tom Bewick: No, if you were to ask for a \$50,000 piece of equipment and you had a really great program for awarding subgrants, we might say, well, we can't give you the \$50,000 for the equipment but we can fund the rest of your project.

Q56: And one other thought occurred to me. How about like handicapped access features?

Tom Bewick: They're allowable.

Q57: Okay. And if we did have to go with purchasing and transporting soil that would all be allowable?

Tom Bewick: Yes.



Q57: Okay, thank you.

Q58: I have a two-part question. The first part is, if one of the subgrant gardens wants to use an education and science principal of aquaponics in a natural and (impermanent) form, would that be okay? And my second part is, would sheep for organic weeding to get the land ready for a garden be acceptable?

Tom Bewick: The first - the aquaponics part would be allowable. I'm a horticulturist so, I know that you can use grazing animals for weed control, but again, it's going to be up to the reviewers, so you'd have to really make a great case on that one.

Q58: Okay.

Q59: Do you need a state application identifier number for this grant?

Tom Bewick: No.

Q59: Thank you.

Q60: Okay, my question is if we're awarded the full grant, could a school apply for a mini grant if that school was not listed originally in the proposal?

Tom Bewick: Yes, that's fine.

Q60: Okay.

Tom Bewick: **Not all the sub-awards have to be listed in the original application.**

Q60: Great.

Tom Bewick: Okay?

Q60: Yes. Thank you.

Q61: We just wanted to make sure that cities and/or local health departments are eligible to apply.

Tom Bewick: Yes, they are.

Q61: Thank you.

Tom Bewick: Yes.

Q62: I wanted to follow up on the matching requirement for the Forest Service funds and I wanted to make sure that we were talking about only Forest Service related projects. So for example, those that are involved in using community trees and forest to maximize social, environmental economic benefits or utilizing wood or are we talking about matching the entire grant total?

Tom Bewick: No, just the amount that would come out of the Forest Service funds.

Q62: Okay.

Q63: Yes, I wanted to ask, what is the expectation on awarding these micro grants? If there's a group that wants to build a garden and they come to us and we have this grant and we ask them to produce the paperwork, we get it to you and you guys approve it, the money goes to them, how do we enforce that they use the money according to what they promise? Or another way to think

about it is do we award ourselves or do we write it in a way that awards ourselves a grant and we use the money to build the garden and then hand the garden over to the community entity that was created?

Tom Bewick: The way that it would work is you would request a total amount of money. Let's say you request \$100,000 and you were going to use \$75,000 to create new gardens. We would award you as the recipient \$100,000 and it would be your responsibility to enter into a subcontract with each of the sub-awardees. And that's the way that you would have control over whether they spent the funds for appropriate reasons. It would all be stipulated in a subcontract.

Q63: Okay, so we would basically have a contract with them, we would send a written description of the project to you guys, you guys approve it, and it really approves us to spend the money and whenever they built the garden. Once they spend money on something, it would be coming from our check account?

Tom Bewick: You can set it up that way. That would be sort of like a reimbursable agreement. Or you can just give them the full amount with the stipulation that it only be spent for these activities or for these reasons.

Q63: Well, I guess the reason why I'm asking the question is if you have an agreement and you give the money to them and they don't follow through on it. I'm sure your program requires us to give feedback that the project was actually built.

Tom Bewick: Well, yes, there's always the audit. And the Office of the Inspector General will come down pretty hard on people who don't use federal money in the way that they promised they would. So that's sort of a stick that you have with your

sub-awardees. You just tell them, this is federal money, you know, Leavenworth is a long way from home.

Q63: Okay. But the other way to approach it is if we kept the responsibility for building the garden under our entity and basically spent the money and then handed the garden over to the community-based entity, would be an acceptable approach? That way we could control actually making sure that the garden was built.

Tom Bewick: Yes, one of the things that I mentioned in my prepared comments is that rather than just providing funds you could develop, 'toolkits' that you would provide to sub-awardees that would contain things that were needed to establish a garden, like a hose, a rake, shovels, seeds, mulch, fertilizer, etc. And that way, you've purchased those things with the money and created these 'toolkits' and then that's what you provide to the sub-awardees.

Q63: Well I hate to beat this to death, but I guess what I'm hearing you say is if you do award the money and have a toolkit for them, but they don't perform, the only recourse you have is saying that the government is going to come down heavy on you. If you give the money and the toolkit, there's a sense of control that you've lost that it's really going to get done according to what was promised.

Tom Bewick: Well, part of the whole concept of a People's Garden is to have the people be involved in the activities. So that would be part of the educational component that you would develop so that you'd have a training and people would have to go through the training before they got the resources to create the garden. And if you could tell they weren't interested in being gardeners then you don't give them the resources. But, that's all part of getting people out working in the

soil, working with plants, becoming part of a community that cares for a garden.

Q63: Not actually gardening, just the construction of the infrastructure, like the perimeter fence, the boxes, the tools, you have to build the infrastructure first and then the community comes in and gardens. I'm not talking about getting people in there to actually participate in gardening.

Tom Bewick: Well, again, the idea of a People's Garden is founded in participation. So if you wanted to be involved in helping people create that infrastructure that would be fine, but certainly we would encourage them to be involved in the creation of the infrastructure as well.

Q63: Okay. But I guess I'm beating a little bit too much, but the question is if we wanted to award ourselves or put our name on the micro grant and award the money to ourselves and include the people, definitely include the people to help, you know, build it, but keep a little bit more control to make sure the project gets completed according to what was promised, as opposed to actually giving the money to someone who says they're going to do something and kind of losing control.

Tom Bewick: Well you would have to describe that in your management plan and then it would be up to the reviewers to decide whether that was the most appropriate way to do it.

Q63: Okay. So it sounds like the paperwork that's submitted on these micro grants is pretty flexible. You're probably going to see all sorts of different combinations of things, and then you look at it and you approve it if it makes sense.

Tom Bewick: Yes, you got it.

Q63: Okay. Thank you.

Q64: I just wanted to be sure that you said that it does not need to be a competitive grants process.

Tom Bewick: **The micro-subgrants do not have to be competitive.**

Q65: And can you tell me when the project period starts?

Tom Bewick: **The project period starts on the date on the award face sheet, which you would get if you're recommended for an award.** You would get (that date) that from us.

Q65: September 1.

Tom Bewick: **September 1 would be the date.**

Q65: September 1, 2011. Okay.

Tom Bewick: Yes.

Q65: And then it's 24 months hence...

Tom Bewick: Correct.

Q66: I have three questions. I have a question in regards to what defines community for the purpose of the People's Garden, specifically in regards to projects dealing with housing authority. Right now we are assisting with some that are

in the confines of a housing authority that is for their general community use with excess going to food banks.

The second question I have is about providing guidance on the sub-granting process. So what kind of technical support will be given after we are approved and funded in regards to setting up those parameters for having a healthy working relationship with sub-grantees.

And then the third one is for a revitalization of a garden for the initial phase is the purchase of a greenhouse to be utilized as a network where people can trade seeds and start seedlings. Is that reasonable purchase under the grant guidelines?

Tom Bewick: Okay, I guess I sort of missed the first part of your question. The second part of your question about what resources are made available, on Page 17 of the RFA there is a number of references that you can go to for helping you manage the money. Greenhouses are not an allowable expense. So what was the first part of your question?

Q66: The first part was as far as defining community. We do a lot of work right now within a housing authority and so we're helping (four) gardens to become established in a cooperative effort, but I'm wondering does that constitute if it's not for a wider range of general community versus being a specific targeted community does that matter?

Tom Bewick: No, **you define community however it suits the objectives of your application.**

Q66: Okay.

Q67: My question is what percentage of the funding would be directed at the subgrants and what could be saved for educational and administrative work for the larger grant.

Tom Bewick: **In the Request for Applications it states that the expectation is the majority of funds would be used for the creation of new gardens. So that's more than 50%. But other than that we don't have an expectation.**

Q67: Thank you.

Q68: Can you speak about the difference between something designated as a People's Garden versus a regular community garden? When I go to the web site there were X number designated in our state as People's Gardens and so what does that mean in terms of future obligations? Is there signage? Are there other things that we need to uphold to be considered a true People's Garden?

Tom Bewick: Okay, I'm going to read to you from Page 5 of the RFA. It says, **"In order for a produce, recreation, or wildlife garden to receive the designation of a People's Garden, it must meet all three of the following criteria: 1) benefit the community, 2) incorporate sustainable practices, and 3) be collaborative."**

Q68: So you could do that outside of this grant's process and just seek designation as a People's Garden independently?

Tom Bewick: Yes.

Q68: And if you are designated as one does it continue forever, do you need to have a sign that says you are?



Tom Bewick: You'd have to go to the People's Garden Initiative Web site ([http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=PEOPLES\\_GARDE\\_N](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=PEOPLES_GARDE_N)) to get all those details, but I do believe that the designation is somewhat permanent.

Q68: Thank you.

Tom Bewick: Yes. Okay. So there are no more questions. We're a little bit over time, but I just wanted to let you know that the initial text that I read from at the beginning before we took questions has been posted to our Web site, so you can go and access that.

And, again, if you have any additional questions, send me an email because a lot of times I'm away from the desk. If you very general questions, remember the policy mailbox, that's [policy@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:policy@nifa.usda.gov).

Are there any last minute questions before we sign off? Okay. Hearing none, I'm going to terminate the call. I want to thank everybody for joining us this afternoon.

END